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OPEN LETTERS.

A criticism of the "Synonymy of Juncodes."

Having been especially interested for the past few years in a critical examination of the order Juncaceæ, and my attention having been drawn to a recent article by Mr. E. P. Sheldon, entitled, "Synonymy of the North American species of Juncodes,"¹ I desire to criticize this paper because it seems a fair sample of a current class of manuscripts which should *not* be published. Its author having in view a revision of the genus *Luzula*, or *Juncoides*, and finding the current nomenclature in an unsatisfactory condition, has proceeded, properly, to make a list of the species, preliminary to his future study of the group. But going further he has published the list in this early stage of its development, before it has been tested by a close examination of either literature or specimens.

The name of the genus was first printed *Juncoides*, not *Juncodes* as quoted by Mr. Sheldon, and was used first by Dillenius in 1719, not by Mœhring in 1736. After the date 1753, adopted by the Genoa Congress as the starting point for our nomenclature, the genus was first characterized by Adanson, who spelled the name *Juncoides*. At least two of the binomials inserted here as new have already been published, and some of the other names can not properly be maintained. The synonymy cited is the same as that given in the last monograph of the Juncaceæ, published in 1890, by Buchenau, he however retaining the Decandollean name *Luzula*. Since, therefore, the generic name is wrong, since some of the names proposed as new have already been published and others can not be maintained, and since the synonymy may be consulted in an excellent monograph only four years old, the list can not add to our present knowledge of the group any information of material value, and it is only to be regretted that its author did not confine it to its legitimate use, that of a manuscript aid to critical study.

At this time, in the absence of any standard book or check-list of American plants in accord with our system of nomenclature, there is a tendency among active botanists for each to prepare lists of his own, and I have called attention to the present paper only because it is a fair illustration of the undesirable result of publishing such lists when the results are not verified by critical study.—FREDERICK V. COVILLE, *Washington, D. C.*

¹Geological and Natural History Survey of Minnesota. Bulletin no. 9. 62-65. 1894.